

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3, and 5-12 are pending. Claims 13-20 previously were withdrawn after election of claims 1-12 with traverse in response to the Examiner's restriction requirement. Reconsideration of the present application and allowance of the pending claims is respectfully requested in view of the following remarks.

Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

The Examiner rejected claims 1, 3, and 6-12 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,182,795 to Baker et al. (hereinafter "Baker") in view of U.S. Patent Publication No. 2005/0053819 to Paz (hereinafter "Paz"). Claim 5 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Baker in view of Paz and further in view of JP 06-068887 to Fujiwara et al. (hereinafter "Fujiwara"). The rejections are respectfully traversed.

The Examiner has failed to establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness because the cited prior art references do not disclose each and every element of the Applicant's claimed invention. Specifically, the cited references fail to disclose that the metallic substrate of the anodic interconnect has an offset plate fin or dimple configuration and includes a first uncoated portion electrically connected to the anode, a second uncoated portion electrically connected to the anodic current collector, and a spacing portion extending between the first and second uncoated portions for spacing the anode from the anodic current collector and forming the space for the fuel gas flow. On the contrary, Applicants respectfully submit that the Examiner's opinion is based upon an erroneous interpretation of Figure 5 of Baker.

Baker discloses a fuel cell (Figure 5, illustrated below) having anode 114 and cathode 112 electrodes and an electrolyte matrix or layer 116 therebetween. Col. 7, Lines 42-45. A separator plate 118, 120 defines channel passages 118a, 120a for supplying fuel/process gas to the anode and oxidant/process gas to the cathode, respectively. Col. 7, Lines 45-52.

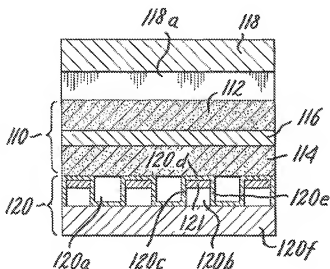


FIG. 5

The Examiner erroneously interprets Figure 5 as teaching that “neither the portion of separator 120 that contacts the anode 114 nor the base of the separator contains catalyst 121.” See Office Action, Page 2, ¶ 4. Such an interpretation, however, directly contradicts the disclosure accompanying Figure 5 as well as the teachings of Baker when the reference is considered as a whole.

Baker teaches use of two separately defined passages 120a and 120b. Passages 120a supply fuel gas directly to the anode 114 and are electrolyte-communicative

passages while passages 120b are in flow isolation from the anode 114 and electrolyte 116. Col. 7, Lines 45-58. Applicants respectfully submit that only Baker's passages 120a, which permit the flow of fuel/process gas over the anode, may be considered equivalent to the flow field defined by Applicants' claimed invention, which provides that "the anodic interconnect compris[es] a metallic substrate providing a flow field between the anode and the anodic current collector for a fuel gas flow over at least a portion of the anode and a catalytic coating on the metallic substrate comprising a catalyst for catalytic conversion of a hydrocarbon fuel in the fuel gas to a hydrogen rich reformat." Although Baker does disclose that electrolyte-isolated passages 120b may include catalyst coatings, Baker expressly teaches that catalyst should not be applied in passages which are not electrolyte-isolated:

Introduction of a reforming catalyst in the path of reactive process gas would serve to realize the foregoing advantages. However, since the reforming is endothermic, it creates cold spots for the electrolyte vapor to condense and, in turn, catalyst activity in promoting reforming would be substantially reduced.

See Col. 3, Lines 1-25; see also Col. 4, Lines 62063; Col. 5, Lines 2-5; and Col. 6, Lines 54-56.

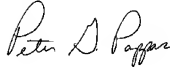
Applicants respectfully submit that Baker not only does not disclose use of catalytic coatings on portions of the metallic substrate which are not electrically connected to the anode and anodic current collector, but also would discourage one of ordinary skill in the art from modifying electrolyte-communicative passages to include a catalytic coating, as required by Applicants' claimed invention. Accordingly, even if the teachings of Paz and Fujiwara were sufficient to overcome the deficiencies of Baker, one skilled in the art would not modify Baker to obtain the Applicants' claimed invention.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, Applicants submit that claims 1, 3, and 5-12 are both novel and patentable over the cited prior art. Allowance of the pending amended claims is earnestly solicited.

If there are any issues which can be resolved by a telephone interview or with an examiner's amendment, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at 404.853.8012.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter G. Pappas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Peter" and last name "Pappas" clearly distinguishable.

Dated: March 14, 2008

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